

F.

FOUR
SISTERS.





THE
FOUR SISTERS

AN ORIGINAL FARCE

IN ONE ACT

BY

BAYLE BERNARD,

AUTHOR OF

*The Dumb Belle; A Practical Man; Middy Ashore;
Man About Town; Balance of Comfort; His Last
Legs; Irish Attorney; Boarding School; Farmer's
Story; Lucille; Passing Cloud; Woman's Faith;
Conquering Game; Mummy; Nervous Man; Marie
Ducange; Maiden's Fame; Storm in a Tea-cup;
Platonic Attachments, &c., &c., &c.*

THOMAS HAILES LACY,
WELLINGTON STREET,
STRAND,
LONDON.

THE FOUR SISTERS.

As originally produced at the Strand Theatre, May 3rd, 1832.

CHARACTERS.

MR. MERTON	.	.	.	MR. STRICKLAND.
BEAUCHAMP	.	.	.	MR. FORRESTER.
SNAFFLE	.	.	.	MR. MITCHELL.
WAITER.				
CAROLINE MERTON	.	.	.	<u>MISS WAYLETT.</u>
SUSAN	.	.	.	MISS ADAMS.

SCENE.—A Country House in Cambridgeshire.

TIME.—The Present Day.

COSTUMES.

MERTON.—Nankeen coat and trousers, white waistcoat, white hat.

BEAUCHAMP.—Green sporting coat, grey trousers, white waistcoat.

SNAFFLE.—Groom's jacket, top boots, and breeches.

CAROLINE.—First dress, a light muslin, straw hat; 2nd dress, (Diana,) riding habit, round hat and feather, whip; 3rd dress, (Eugenia,) dark velvet or satin; 4th dress, (Ellen,) a white frock, apron, keys, &c.

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Anna St. Carter

THE FOUR SISTERS.

SCENE I.—*Parlour of an Inn. Table with writing materials, chairs, &c.*

BEAUCHAMP *enters*, R. H. 1 E., *followed by* WAITER.

BEAU. Oh, that's Mr. Merton's—the house I see yonder?

WAITER. Yes, sir, it is.

BEAU. Very well; then you'll be good enough to give my horses a bucket of water, and bring me a glass of sherry?

WAITER. Yes, sir, I will. (*he goes off* L. H. 1 E.)

(BEAUCHAMP *takes a seat*, *looking at his watch*.)

BEAU. So, I can just spare the time—can just give ten minutes to this call on a friend—whose door I approach after a six months' delay.

SNAFFLE *enters*, L. H.

SNAF. She's out of sight now, sir.

BEAU. What—our fair traveller?

SNAF. Yes, gone away at a regular canter!

BEAU. What a puzzling affair! A pony chaise smashed—and a lady on the bank, wondering how she'd get home: I offer my phaeton, and, after a drive of two miles, I can neither learn her name, nor get a sight of her face.

SNAF. Then she worn't very proud on it, I'll lay you odds, sir.

BEAU. Couldn't even guess her age!

SNAF. Well, sir, no wonder, if you couldn't see her teeth!

BEAU. Though I daresay this shyness was only affected—a mere plan of the little baggage, to get me to talk; for these country girls are knowing ones—deep, Sam, deep.

SNAF. As deep as our horse pond, and not a bit clearer.

BEAU. But I repaid her, I fancy—for I abused her sex famously; told her how I'd been jilted, and so brought to my senses; how I'd been schooled into a wholesale aversion to women; said my happiness, now, had a stable foundation—all I cared for was racing—all I loved was a horse—

SNAF. Yes, sir, a horse—

BEAU. The soul of grace and spirit—the type of fidelity: a horse that has been always man's faithful companion, from the wandering Arab down to the civilized Goth; that has borne him to battle, or carried him to hounds.

SNAF. In course, sir, in course.

BEAU. That has even enriched him—won purses and cups. Why, compared with a woman—

SNAF. A woman, indeed—why a colt can win cups before a gal's learnt to wash 'em.

WAITER enters with decanter and glasses.

WAITER. Sherry, if you please, sir.

BEAU. Thank you—that will do. (*WAITER goes off again, L. H. BEAUCHAMP helps himself.*) Well, Sam, you're aware that this is a critical day for me—the day on which my thorough-bred starts for the Craven. Mr. Beauchamp's colt, Firefly, backed against the field.

SNAF. And will have it, all hollow—St. Paul's to a dust bin.

BEAU. That is, I hope so, for I depend on your judgment; for if Firefly loses, there'll be a run on my bank.

SNAF. Loses the race, sir! It's an impossibility—see who she's come from, and what she has done—run everywhere, and beat everythink. Why she'd do more on three legs than many on five.

BEAU. How very exciting! And if she does win, I'll have her portrait painted, Sam, by one of our best artists, and you, by her side, in a scientific attitude, holding her nose.

SNAF. What, sir, in this way?

BEAU. Exactly, exactly: and so, Sam, as it's only a mile to the course, and but an hour to the running, I dare

say you're surprised at my present delay—why I've pulled up here?

SNAF. Well, if 'tain't a liberty, that's just the fact, sir.

BEAU. Then, in the house you see yonder, is an old friend of mine, who's been boring me these ten months to pay him a visit—the English of it being that he's blest with a daughter—

SNAF. A daughter!

BEAU. A daughter whom I encountered in London, and—

SNAF. But you don't think of marrying her—taking a wife, sir?

BEAU. Indeed but I do.

SNAF. What, sir — when yours are all well-broken cattle, do you want a filly that no one can manage?

BEAU. Well, Sam, I know—

SNAF. Why look at the risk, sir. If she's sound in wind and limb, ten to one she can't step; and if her head's well set on, how do you know what's her temper?

BEAU. Ver—y true, ver—y true.

SNAF. For what you can tell, she's got ten thousand tricks.

BEAU. But then, as an offset, she'll have ten thousand pounds, and, as I've learnt not to care a single pin for the sex, I can take tricks and money with equal philosophy. No, Sam, no; her money will enable me to keep up my stud, and as for herself—why marriage, you know, is a common necessity; a man undergoes it as he does vaccination—it's an affliction that serves to protect him from worse ones.

SNAF. Then you are going to see this lady instead of the race?

BEAU. Indeed I am not. I shall stop but ten minutes—my visit of to-day is the merest formality—a sort of quick plunge just to take off the chill, and—

WAITER returns from L. H.

WAITER. A note from Mr. Merton, sir.

(WAITER goes off again L. H. BEAUCHAMP opens the note. SAM helps himself to wine.)

BEAU. Oh, the old gentleman—and what does he say? (*reads.*) “Dear George, I saw you alight, and at once guessed your aim, which, of course, was to surprise me; but, in spite of your cleverness, I shall get a few friends to meet you—our worthy Doctor, Major Muddle, and some half dozen others. N.B.—A certain young lady’s in a fever about it.” And so ’s a certain gentleman—Sam, did you hear?

SNAF. (*putting down the glass.*) Swallowed it all, sir.

BEAU. I should be kept there till midnight, filled with claret to the lips, and know as little of the race as of the shape of the room. What am I to do?

SNAF. Do! Why, be off, sir—you can’t stay to dinner—you’ve to think of the plate.

BEAU. I have it—I have it—a brilliant idea! (*he sits at table and writes.*) Snaffle, if you find I don’t leave them directly, send in this note to me; I’ll pretend I’ve left a friend here—Bingham, we’ll say; and he, you see, Sam, shall be suddenly ill—yes, very ill: by-the-bye, what disorders are prevalent now?

SNAF. Why, sir, the staggers are werry much about.

BEAU. (*aside.*) What a Centaur it is! I mean among men, sir?

SNAF. Well, the worst that I knows on is a doo want of wind.

BEAU. There, that’ll do—I’ll seal it at the bar. Now, Snaffle, remember, if I don’t make my appearance in a quarter of an hour, you’ll send in this note.

SNAF. Yes, sir, I will.

BEAU. And if that takes no effect, you’ll come for me in person—in person, do you hear? and swear my poor friend is in a most dangerous state—swear he’s delirious.

SNAF. Oh, I’ll swear enough, sir.

BEAU. And, then, if I hesitate, you’ll know what it means—that it’s merely a compliment to the people about me.

SNAF. I see, sir, I see.

BEAU. You’ll know it’s all sham, so you’ll take no denial—but, in the name of humanity, bundle me out.

SNAF. Like a bad truss of clover—I’m down, sir, I’m down.

BEAU. So now I'll be off—keep the Phaeton ready.

SNAF. All right, sir, all right.

BEAU. And if they do try to saddle me—

SNAF. I'll bring a curb, sir.

BEAU. Ha! ha! I say, Sam, we shall do the old knowing one.

SNAF. Clean as a whistle, sir.

BEAU. Remember, now, Bingham—poor Bingham—dangerous.

SNAF. Oh, werry bad—werry, sir.

BEAU. Despaired of—delirious—

SNAF. In short—got the staggers.

BEAU. Oh, hang the staggers! Get out, sir.

(*they go off*, L. H.)

SCENE II.—*Parlour of a Villa—elegantly furnished; opening at back on a garden; doors R. H. and L. H.*

MR. MERTON comes from L. H. door, meeting CAROLINE, who runs in from the lawn. C.

—CARRY. Oh, papa—oh, papa!

MERTON. Well, Carry, well—late, you see, as usual. Time flies with you, indeed, when you're always behind it.

—CARRY. But, papa, I've had an accident.

MERTON. An accident!

—CARRY. Yes, and I've suffered such agonies.

MERTON. My dear child, do explain.

—CARRY. Why that horrible chaise—merely because I drove it over two heaps of stones—the axletree broke—

MERTON. And you were thrown out?

—CARRY. No, not exactly; but it was almost as bad—for I had to stand on a bank whilst Robert set to work, and there become the gaze of every creature that passed, not one of whom assisted, but seemed to enjoy our misfortune.

MERTON. And so you walked home—repining at the departure of the sweet days of chivalry?

—CARRY. Oh no, I didn't; for, presently, a gentleman

—drove up in a phaeton, who begg'd very politely to set me down at my door—and who do you think he was, papa?

MERTON. A very handsome man, of course.

—CARRY. Mr. Beauchamp.

MERTON. Is it possible?

—CARRY. Mr. Beauchamp himself.

MERTON. Well, Carry, well, he was delighted to see you?

—CARRY. He remembered me about as much as he would have done his great aunt.

MERTON. But you speedily enlightened him?

—CARRY. Indeed I did not; I fancy I catch myself compelling a recollection—staring a gentleman out of countenance, whilst, with a curtesy to the ground, I delicately lisped, oh, Mr. Beauchamp, don't you remember Miss Merton?

MERTON. Well, but my dear child, you accepted his offer—you enjoyed his conversation?

—CARRY. I endured it, papa—and didn't think I possess'd such extraordinary heroism; till to-day I'd some hopes that the man had been slandered—but I find report flatters him—that in the most literal sense of the word he's a wretch!

MERTON. Caroline!

—CARRY. A wretch—who, deceived by one woman, thinks badly of all—and because, as I fancy, he isn't worthy of any.

MERTON. And did you learn this from himself?

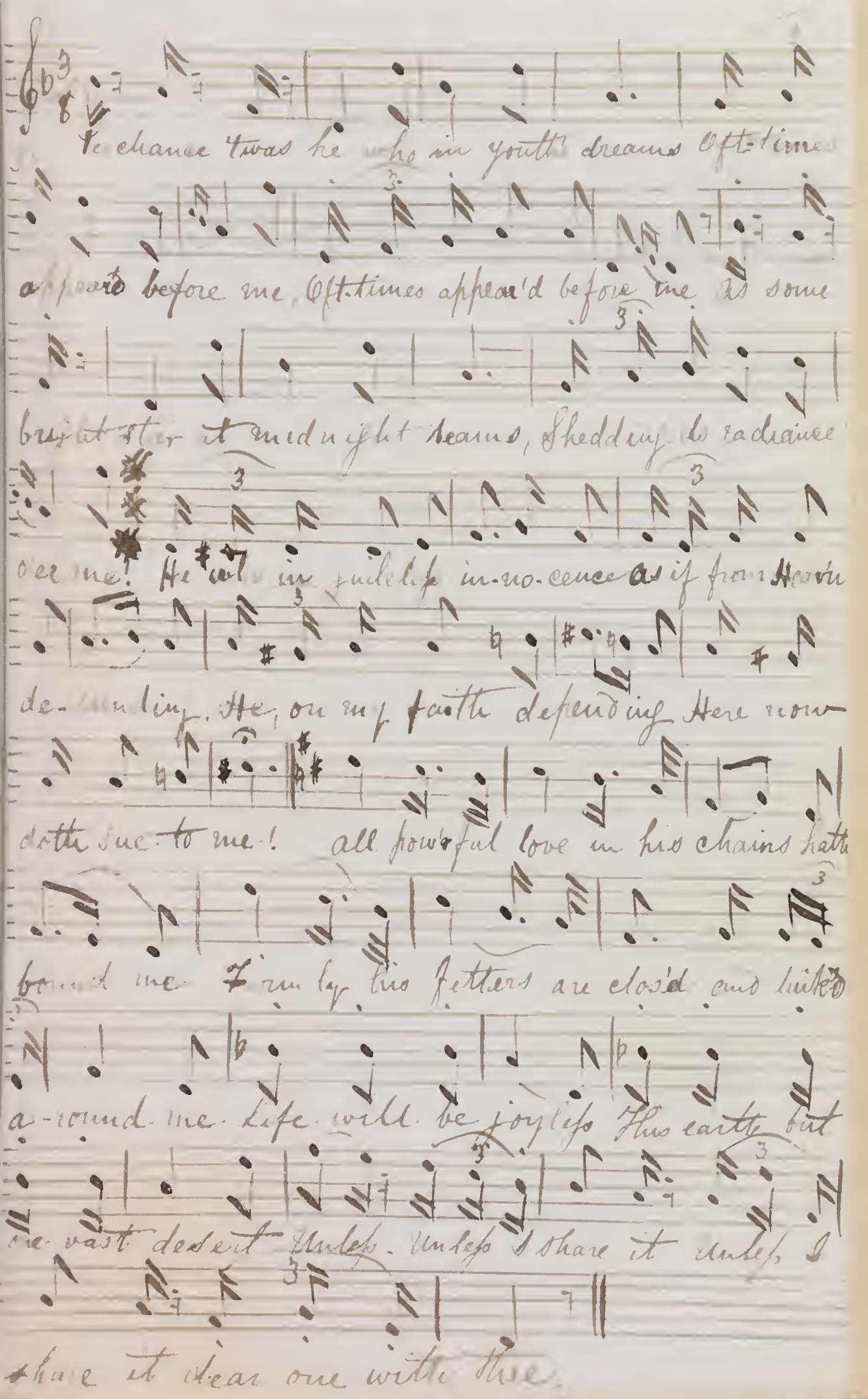
—CARRY. Yes—from himself, he thinking me a simpleton, who'd be pleased with even slanders from a person of fashion; and what do you think was his impertinence—I'm sure you'll never guess it—when to avoid a discovery I alit at the park—he actually suffered me to go, without inquiring my abode—or expressing the slightest wish ever to see me again.

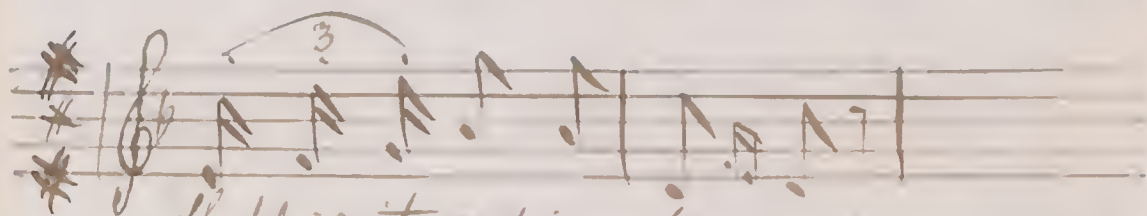
—MERTON. (*aside.*) Oh, there the shoe pinches.

—CARRY. The brute.

MERTON. Come, come, Carry, I can see you are prejudiced; if he's been treated so badly, he deserves to be pitied.

—CARRY. He'd be very sorry, I fancy, to receive his deserts.


The chance 'twas he who in youth dreams oft-times
appear'd before me, oft-times appear'd before me as some
bright star at midnight beams, Shedding its radiance
o'er me! He who in guileless innocence as if from Heaven
descending, He, on my faith depending Here now
doth sue to me! all powerful love in his chains hath
bound me & truly his fetters are clos'd and link'd
a-round me. Life will be joyless This earth but
one vast desert Unless, Unless I share it unless I
share it dear one with thee.



shedding its radiance for me.

MERTON. And you must be sure if I didn't know him, I should never wish him to see you—to say nothing of the fact of my going to school with his father!

CARRY. For which sacred reason I must go to church with the son!

MERTON. Now—don't misunderstand me—convinced as I am that from a parity of years and tastes you would be happy together—still I scarcely expect to gain my end by compulsion; so all I ask for the present is that you receive him as my friend.

CARRY. Now I know it's my father speaks to me, for his words reach my heart.

MERTON. That's right, that's right; and now as he's coming—Ha, ha! Carry he wanted to surprise me, but I'm even with him I think, for I've sent an invitation to half of our neighbours, though there's one been forgotten, our excellent Rector, and as his house is so near, I might get there and back again before Beauchamp comes.

CARRY. But if you should not, what should I do, papa?

MERTON. What shall you do, indeed; why I suppose, miss, you can ask your father's friend to take a seat, or summon sufficient composure to ring for some wine! Oh you women, you women, you're like your own Geneva watches, very pretty and delicate, but rarely understood, and hardly capable of mending. (*he goes off* L. H.)

CARRY. Why this favours my plan—the plan I and Susan were concerting last night; if I dared confess the fact, I believe I don't exactly detest this same gentleman—I doubt after all he's as bad as he pretends to be; a woman hater's a something that's so very absurd—in addition to which—go where I would during the winter, I heard nothing but his name, and the women abusing him, for which sufficient reason, I suppose, I began to like him—of course thought him persecuted—and so took his part, well, time will shew—but, meanwhile, as he likes music, I may as well try the song which papa will be certain to call for this evening.

✕. (*Song.—at its end SUSAN comes from the lawn.*)

SUSAN. Well, miss, are you ready?

CARRY. What, is he come?

SUSAN. Yes miss, this instant, he is now in the avenue.
—CARRY. And luckily, Susan, papa is out of the way, so our project is possible, our excellent plan, either so to disgust him that he'll decline his addresses, or to elicit such feelings as could alone make me happy—and now I think I hear him; yes, it is he — so the moment's arrived, and remember now, Susan, how much depends on yourself.
[*She goes off by R. H. door.*]

BEAUCHAMP *comes from the lawn.* C

BEAU. Oh, will you say, my good girl, Mr. Beauchamp is here; your master expects me.

SUSAN. Master's gone out, sir.

BEAU. (*aside.*) Gone out, how very fortunate!—an immediate escape—well, then, be good enough to take my name to your young lady.

SUSAN. Which young lady, sir?

BEAU. Which? Mr. Merton's but one daughter?

SUSAN. Mr. Merton's got four, sir!

BEAU. Four?

SUSAN. Yes, four sir; I see you're a stranger.

BEAU. And why did he never mention them?

SUSAN. Oh, that's always his way, sir, he loves Miss Carry so much, he never speaks of the others.

BEAU. Miss Carry, eh? (*aside.*) That's my beloved; then be good enough, will you, to carry my name to Miss Carry.

SUSAN. She's gone out too, sir.

BEAU. Why I thought I saw a lady as I passed by the lawn.

SUSAN. That was Miss Diana.

(CAROLINE and a SERVANT are heard outside R. H. and the cracking of a whip.

SERVANT. Oh ma'am, ma'am!

CARRY. You negligent fellow, if you don't fasten these traces better.

BEAU. What's that?

SUSAN. Only Miss Diana, sir, horsewhipping Tom!

BEAU. Horsewhipping Tom? is her temper so violent?

SUSAN. Oh, bless you, no, sir, it's as smooth as silk mostly; she only does it for exercise!

BEAU. Exercise, eh? Female gymnastics, how very refreshing.

SUSAN. As soon as Miss Carry comes, sir, I'll tell her you're here. *[She goes off at back.]*

BEAU. Four girls in the house! Come then, there's variety—and some change, I dare say, from our London productions—girls who like their made flowers, are best seen by candle-light; these I'll be bound are all genuine nature, a convoy of plump little family partridges, who play old-fashioned music, keep old-fashioned hours, and read books which were popular in the year eighteen hundred.

(CAROLINE is heard outside singing—

“Sound the horn, &c.”

She enters from the lawn in a riding habit, round hat, whip, eye-glass.

—CARRY. Eh? Is it possible, Cummins of Cheshire, come here to hunt with us?

BEAU. No, ma'am, I'm not, I—

—CARRY. Oh, the auctioneer who's going to appraise the old stables.

BEAU. The auctioneer, madam?

—CARRY. Higgins, how are you? Pray take a seat.

BEAU. I really was not aware that—

—CARRY. You look your profession? Oh certainly, certainly—one sees it at once; there's a certain knocking down air with that right hand of yours, which—

BEAU. (*aside.*) Which, if you were a man, you might have sensible proof of—my name is Beauchamp.

—CARRY. Mr. Beauchamp, I really beg pardon, but I'm sure you'll excuse me; society has now so little of outward distinction that there's really no telling a duke from a dancing-master.

BEAU. Very true, very true—from which I infer, that though your home's so retired, you're not unused to society.

—CARRY. Not I, indeed. I know all the punishment of a London existence—that horrid imposture which it designates life. Owing to family ties, I had to yawn through three seasons; making morning calls on people I wished under ground, or going nightly to parties where

—my only enjoyment was to make my friends wretched by flirting with their lovers.

BEAU. Well, I confess it, London enjoyment is certainly sadly malicious ; and, as all this was your aversion, may I ask what, on the contrary, were your sources of happiness ?
(*he takes a chair near her.*)

—CARRY. Riding and driving.

BEAU. Driving ?

—CARRY. Yes, driving—any kind of cattle from a cob to an antelope, and any sort of vehicle, from a gig to a drosky. I needn't ask you if you heard of my little feat in the winter ?

BEAU. Your little *feat* ! 'Pon my word I'm in ignorance.

—CARRY. Well, I bet Harry Dashwood—of course you know Harry—that I'd drive his phaeton from Limmers' down Bond Street, St. James's, through Pall Mall, and up Regent Street, back to the point of starting, in less time than he would be able to run to his club, call for pen, ink, and paper, and write a letter to Mrs. D., not amounting to less than fifteen lines, of endearment, to be submitted to four competent judges beside him, as sufficiently spirited, fond, and spontaneous ; (the captain has been married *ten* years, understand) : the wager, on his part, to be a superb diamond necklace ; and the wager, on mine, to polk with him all the evening at the very next Almacks.

BEAU. And how was it decided ?

—CARRY. He won it.

BEAU. Indeed ! Well, I should have thought the letter to his wife would have puzzled him a little.

—CARRY. You shall hear. On the start being given, I threw my two bays into the prettiest canter conceivable, whirled along Bond Street, and swung round White's corner with such a graceful gyration, that up flew the club windows, and out popped every head—"Who is she ?" cried one—"An adept," said another—"Beautiful," cried a third—meaning the horses, of course. My flight down the street was that of a comet ; my friend, Harry, I'm sure, hadn't done his first line, when, attempting to double Sams's with the same ease I did White's, the near horse took fright—the wheel mounted the curb—over went the phaeton—out flew the groom—whilst I, waving

Q "Hark forward away"

my whip, and jumping down from the box, was caught in the arms of a trio of officers—discussing cigars.

BEAU. Enviably fellows!

—CARRY. Since then, I confess, my taste has turned to hunting; and, as there are hounds all about, I go out every week. I'm an honorary member of the Melton Mowbray; a regular leader of the Suffolk Neck-or-nothing: we haven't a hedge or a five-bar I haven't been over; a ditch I haven't measured; or a wall I haven't grazed. I'm the first at the meet—rarely the last at the death; and yet I must say, that, sweet as is the music of a pack in full cry, of all riding, whatever, commend me to a race.

BEAU. A race?

—CARRY. Yes, a race—where horse matches horse—neck to neck—limb to limb—and one spirit, one being, fills rider and steed.

BEAU. And do you actually think you could manage a race?

—CARRY. I have managed dozens.

BEAU. You have? What a woman! I must tell you that racing is also my passion. I've a horse that starts for the Craven in less than an hour.

—CARRY. Indeed! how provoking! Had I known it before, I would have ridden him myself, and ensured your success.

BEAU. (*aside.*) What a treasure of a woman! I really beg pardon, your name must be Caroline?

—CARRY. Oh no, Diana; but I see you're impatient—a good sign. I'll hunt her up.

BEAU. No, no—you mistake me.

—CARRY. It's not the least trouble.

BEAU. On the contrary, I assure you—

—CARRY. Come, come, I understand: you think your ardour has offended me—nothing of the sort: we shall be very good friends; but you must promise me one thing—to belong to our hunt, you must promise that. We are the merriest, noisiest set of fellows alive. Swamp or turf—hedge or ditch—hill or dale—road or meadow—it's all one to your—hieover, yoicks, neck or nothing. (*sings.*)

“Sound the horn, &c.”

(She cracks her whip, gives him a cut, and goes out at the back.)

BEAU. (*rubbing his legs.*) Was there ever such a woman—such spirit, such sense: a something about her one can't help but feel. Talk of Caroline, indeed—I'll be bound by her side a mere country dawdle. Why Firefly and she would make my fortune at races; my first match would win dozens. I will—I'm resolved—I'll propose for her instantly—but then, the ten thousand! I wonder if her father would let me have her with five; I should make up the difference in the very first year. I'll ask him—I will: I don't believe I was ever thoroughly in love till this moment, and—

SUSAN *returns from L. H. door.*

SUSAN. Oh, I beg pardon.

BEAU. Quite right—glad you're come—run after your young lady.

SUSAN. Miss Caroline, sir?

BEAU. No, no—Diana.

SUSAN. Why you don't mean to say, sir, that you're running after her?

BEAU. Oh, but I do, though; I've something to say to her—something most important.

SUSAN. Why she seems to have struck you, sir?

BEAU. Well, girl, she has.

SUSAN. Always the way, sir—Miss Diana is certain to make an impression.

BEAU. (*aside.*) Even through boots!

SUSAN. All the men like her, sir; she's so fond of hounds.

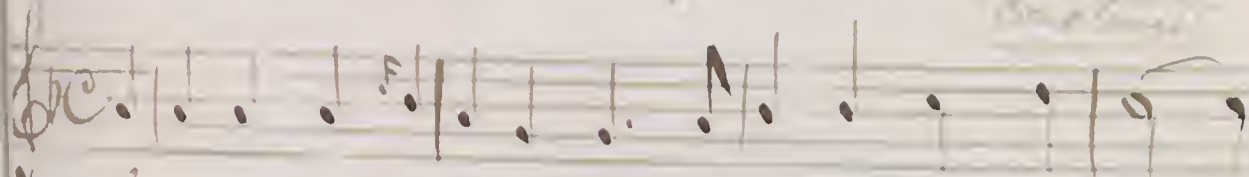
BEAU. Is she, indeed?

SUSAN. And she has such a variety; one comes from Lincolnshire, another from London; just now I saw her training a very strange animal.

BEAU. (*aside.*) This girl must be roasting me.—Susan, come here; it's no use disguising it, I love your young lady—love her with an ardour which a young woman in your station can't have the smallest idea of—you must carry a note to her.

SUSAN. A letter—oh no, sir.

does that word paint him.



I do not ask to offer thee a timid love like mine



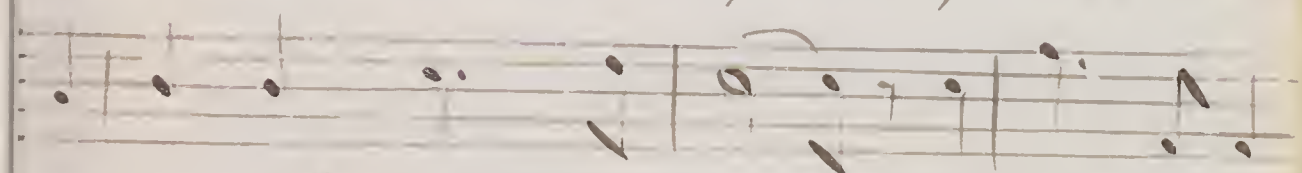
I lay it as the rose is laid on some immortal



shrine I have no hope in loving thee I only



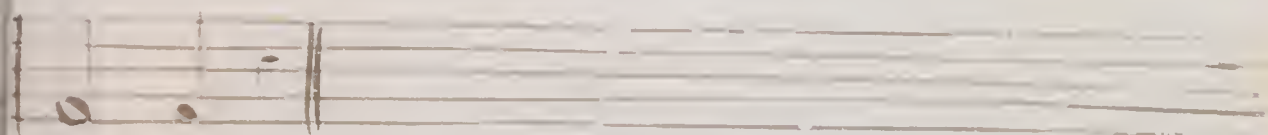
ask to love I brood upon my silent heart



as on its nest the dove I brood upon



my silent heart as on its nest the



Love. -

J.P.

2^d Verse

But little time I have beloved
Lies silent and alone
And yet I feel in loving thee;
The wide world is mine own
Lies in the room I breathe to
Thy face is on my sleep
I only ask that love like this,
May pray for thee and me

BEAU. Oh, but you must.

SUSAN. But, indeed, sir, I can't. I'm a carrier in this house, certainly; but I'm by no means the post.

BEAU. Unless, agreeably to regulations, all notes are pre-paid. There's a queen's head for you.

SUSAN. A sovereign—dear me!

BEAU. And still further to ensure delivery, you shall have the post mark.

(He kisses her. CAROLINE appears at the back in a dark dress—a drawing in her hand. SUSAN runs off by R. H. door.)

—CAROLINE advances without observing him, and sinks into a chair, R. H.

—CARRY. Maggiore—ah, Maggiore! *(sighs.)*

BEAU. *(aside.)* Why which of 'em's this?

—CARRY. Lake of my dreams and memories—my sorrows and my joys.

BEAU. *(aside.)* She's had some calamity.

—CARRY. Beautiful, but piteous—treasured, but dark Maggiore.

BEAU. *(aside.)* She's certainly very pleasing—an interest about her—a sort of melancholy romance which—I really beg pardon.

—CARRY. A stranger!

(she turns and rises, putting down the drawing.)

BEAU. Pardon me, I entreat, if I intrude on you at all; but the appearance of such sadness—

—CARRY. Yes, sir, yes.

BEAU. The evidence that you've suffered some unusual bereavement—

—CARRY. Suffered—yet survive.

BEAU. Some one very dear to you?

—CARRY. Dear sir, does that word paint him?

(she sinks again into a chair.)

BEAU. *(aside.)* Excessively interesting! I must know all about it. I—sighing again—now if that fun continues, I shall be certain to catch it. You spoke of Maggiore? *(taking up the drawing.)* A view of it, I see. Your production, of course? *(she nods.)* And very charming it is—the spot lives before me. Well, drawing is one

of the tastes I demand in a woman. And this place is connected with some sad recollections?

—CARRY. Yes, sir, most sad. It was there that he I speak of—

BEAU. Was drowned, madam, drowned! Why the being that I loved was lost in that manner—lost, too, in *Italy*; so our sufferings are mutual.

—CARRY. Is it possible?

BEAU. Mutual, madam, mutual; and so should be our sympathy. I am bound, I see, to offer you my sincerest condolence; and I do offer it, madam—I offer it heartily. (*he draws a chair near her.*) And so the Lago Maggiore was the scene of your misery?

—CARRY. But also of our joy—our joy! where, earth forgetting, by the world forgot, life lapsed away as in a golden dream.

BEAU. How very delightful!

—CARRY. Where, had I a pain, his love could draw it forth; where, if a pebble pierced my careless foot, he dropped a tear upon the little wound, and gave me sigh for sigh. (*sighs.*)

BEAU. (*aside.*) Oh, I'm in danger of pulmonary complaint.

—CARRY. There, as the day broke, how we would climb the mountain side—our hair given to the winds—our eyes fondly traversing the radiant scene.

BEAU. I see—I see.

—CARRY. Or, when the moon cast her silver on the lake, how spirit-like we'd float, whilst fondly he would cry—

BEAU. Exquisite—exquisite!

—CARRY. Eugenia, forever rest your head upon this bosom—

(BEAUCHAMP, *having drawn nearer during this, glides his arm round her, and repeats.*

BEAU. Eugenia, forever rest your—

—CARRY. Sir!

BEAU. I really beg pardon; I was so full of the illusion, I—and this man you've lost, madam—and the cause, might I know it?

—CARRY. A lovely one.

BEAU. A lovely one?

—CARRY. It was a dog—a gentle creature—so amiable,

—so white, so full of affection. One fatal night he fell into the lake; I shrieked with agony—Oh, save my darling! My husband, living only for my sake, sprang after him; he dived—he swam—he bore him to my arms—when, oh, horror, the next moment I heard his head go bump against the boat; he sank—to rise no more!

BEAU. What a terrible tragedy! And after such a trial, how much must you need every possible sympathy.

—CARRY. And yet, sir, and yet—

BEAU. Must require all the solace 'tis in man to bestow; permit him, then, who speaks to you, to offer this solace.

—CARRY. You, Mr. Beauchamp?

BEAU. I, madam—I?

—CARRY. You think you see Caroline?

BEAU. No, no, I see you.

(SNAFFLE is heard outside at back.) I tell you I must then.

—CARRY. (rising.) Ah, some one comes!

BEAU. But you won't go till you've told me—

—CARRY. Nothing now—nothing now.

BEAU. Till you've given me one word?

—CARRY. Not now, I entreat you.

BEAU. When I ask but a word?

(Kneeling, he detains her as SNAFFLE runs in at back, his coat hanging on his arm.

SNAF. Oh, sir! sir! sir!

BEAU. Well, sir, what's the matter?

SNAF. I'm too frightened to speak!

BEAU. What the deuce has happened?

SNAF. Mr. Bingham, sir—

BEAU. (rising.) Oh, get out!

SNAF. Such a dreadful calamity!

BEAU. Get out, I say!

—CARRY. A friend of yours?

SNAF. Yes, ma'am.

BEAU. Oh, nonsense—it's all fudge!

SNAF. Fudge, sir! Do you call it fudge when a man has broke a leg, two ribs, and a collar-bone?

—CARRY. Good heavens!

BEAU. I assure you it's all a hoax.

SNAF. A hoax, sir, when Mr. Bingham is dying for a surgeon?

— | CARRY. I hear my sister's voice—I will send her to you.

X. (*Getting free, she runs off by R. H. door.* BEAUCHAMP walks about.

SNAF. Ha! ha! I've started her—well, sir, it's all right.

BEAU. All right, indeed—all right!

SNAF. And I think I did it pretty tidy.

BEAU. Tidy, sir, tidy; you're anything but tidy. How could you dare think of coming here in such a style as this?

SNAF. Why warn't it what you told me—warn't it to look nat'ral?

BEAU. It looks beastly!

SNAF. I was going to send the note, sir; but says I to myself, if I goes to the house at once, and kicks up a good row, ten to one he'll like it better.

BEAU. Oh, of course, liked it greatly—to cut my throat with my own razor.

SNAF. And how cleverly you talked, sir; why if I hadn't been awake, I should have thought you were in a passion.

BEAU. Should you really?

SNAF. Never seed a thing done better.

BEAU. (*aside.*) You'll see another thing done presently.

SNAF. (*putting on his coat.*) Well, sir, let's be off—we've only half an hour.

BEAU. And in five minutes I'll be ready.

SNAF. In five minutes—why by then we shall be jockeyed out of all our chances.

BEAU. Then what if you go without me?

SNAF. Go without you?

BEAU. You're sufficient to see that there's fair play, and—

SNAF. But then you'd lose the sight.

BEAU. Never mind that.

SNAF. Never mind the race, sir! Now it's no use your thinking to try it on with me—I ain't a young lady.

BEAU. But you happen to be my servant, and if I tell you to go—

SNAF. Then the total on it is, sir, that you want to bolt.



BEAU. Well, sir, and if I do?

SNAF. Then, as I think it my dooty to keep you in the course—

BEAU. Get out, you scoundrel, instantly!

SNAF. Well, sir, I've warned you—given you warning, recollect.

BEAU. And I'll give you warning, if you don't be off, directly.

SNAF. Oh, werry well, sir—just as you please.

(he goes off at the back.)

BEAU. And now that I've got rid of this piece of stable-sticking plaister—

SNAF. *(returning, talking to himself.)* Now I say, Sam, is it your dooty to leave him with these gals, when—

BEAU. Do you want to be annihilated? *(SNAFFLE runs off again.)* I must follow her—see her instantly. That girl has overwhelmed me—such feeling—such refinement—such poetry and tenderness; talk of Diana, by her side a mere Amazon like that—a Tartar upon horseback, that darts all her arrows flying. Eugenia would make my home a paradise—a world of light and beauty; so I shall propose for her at once—and if her father should object, I'd reduce his scruples with my terms. I'll take her at a *fifth*—two thousand instead of ten—at one half that I would *Diana*: and so as that's decided—

CAROLINE *comes from the lawn in a housekeeper's dress—*
a bunch of keys by her side.

CARRY. I beg pardon, Mr. Beauchamp—but I am desired by my sister, Caroline, to say, that since her return she has had a slight indisposition which—

BEAU. Which I beg she'll not increase on my account. I must request she'll run no risks; I'm not at all in a hurry—that is, I'm anxious, certainly, but—*(aside.)* If I could see Eugenia for five minutes—for five minutes only, I might manage to—I'll make this girl my messenger. Ahem! do you know, Miss Merton, your sister who has just left me—I think her name's Eugenia—has been giving me some details of a favourite spot of mine in Italy, which I should like to put on paper—would you oblige me by taking a note to her?

CARRY. Oh, certainly—and here I think you'll find materials.

X. (*She points to a table, L. H. He sits at it, and prepares to write; she sits R. H., and takes out work.*)

BEAU. (*aside.*) Was there ever such good fortune! Now I can pen an appeal to her, which will at least, procure a meeting.

CAROLINE *sings.*

"There's a pleasure for me whilst the world is so bright,
"With its sunbeams by day, and its starbeams by night;

"Whilst its woods have such music—its fields have such stores,

"And its waves dance in gladness along its blue shores.

"Then, maidens—maidens, imitate me;

"Merry I have been, and merry I'll be."

(*At the end of the verse, BEAUCHAMP, who has been listening, taps a loud accompaniment.*)

CARRY. (*turning.*) I'm very rude, Mr. Beauchamp?

BEAU. Oh, not at all—on the contrary, gratifying. Music, I assure you, is one of my passions; so I beg you'll proceed. So far from interrupting, you gave my thoughts harmony.

CAROLINE *sings again.*

"There's a pleasure for me in the smile of the sky,

"And a joy in the voice of the stream that runs by;

"There's a calm in the woods, and a health on the seas,

"And a murmur of love in each sigh of the breeze.

"Then maidens—maidens, &c.

(BEAUCHAMP, again accompanying, joins in the last two lines.)

CARRY. Have you finished your letter, sir?

BEAU. Letter! why, really, the fact is, your song has driven it out of my head.

CARRY. There—I knew I had disturbed you.

BEAU. Not at all; I rather think 'twill be an advantage. The brain, after all, is something like a kaleidoscope, and a momentary shaking may enable its particles to take a pleasanter form.

CARRY. And, perhaps, all the sooner if I leave you alone.

BEAU. On the contrary; your example must have the happiest effect. I must request that you'll remain, and

Car - How that song that Mary ^{the}
was humming this morning runs
in my head, I'll see if I
can remember it. - St. J.
"When first I went to school"

pursue your vocation, whilst I, with renewed vigour, return to my letter.

(He turns to table, L. H., and prepares to write; she sits at table, R. H., opens a book, and takes out a pencil.)

CARRY. Then, as I find I'm in arrears, I will make a few entries in my housekeeper's book. Three quarts of milk, ninepence—six quartern loaves, five shillings.

BEAU. *(writing.)* "Dear Eugenia, brief as has been our acquaintance, our identity of feeling induces me to offer you—

— CARRY. *(writing.)* A sheep's heart!

BEAU. Ahem! *(writing.)* "I have renounced your sex—despised it; but, at your presence, I return to—

— CARRY. *(writing.)* Sugar, oil, and soap!

BEAU. Poh! *(writing.)* "Eugenia—dear Eugenia, could I induce you to regard my feelings, I would propose to your good father to settle on you instantly—

— CARRY. *(writing.)* One pound five and tenpence, including extras.

BEAU. Madam!

— CARRY. Sir!

BEAU. Ha! ha! pardon me, but you seem to be the very Atlas of this house—everything upon your shoulders.

CARRY. And yet, sir, I'm quite miserable when I think how little I get through. It's true, I rise at five, and call the maids—unlock the closets—give the plate out—feed my pigeons—see my plants, and inspect the dairy before the bell for breakfast, and yet it always seems I've nothing ready but my appetite. Then at breakfast all I do is to carve the fowls—make the coffee—spread the toast, and kiss papa, or break his eggs—and taste his ham—and read the London papers to him from the first line to the last; without skipping one allusion to the merits of Robert Warren, or setting aside the virtues of Rowland's Macassar oil. At half past eight—

— BEAU. Gracious powers!

— CARRY. The gig is ordered, and I certainly drive to market—go to the butcher's, baker's, grocer's—the oilman and the seedsman; correct their bills—examine stocks, and make purchases with ready money, in order to obtain a discount: then call at the doctor's or the milliner's—the mercer's or the shoemaker's—the tailor's

or confectioner's—the silversmith's or painter's—for papa or one of my sisters, or a cousin or a neighbour—or the gardener, cook, or coachman, as occasion may require. By twelve—

BEAU. Any more?

CARRY. Horses are ready, and, it's true, I accompany papa round the estate; he looking to the barns and stables, crops, implements, and live stock; I visiting the cottages and my little school in the village, where I distribute books and medals to the good little girls, and leave the discount I made in the morning with their hard-working parents. Then, if we don't go fishing, sketching, or gypsying, we're home again by three; and in the evening I try to be useful, and sing, or play, or read, or dance, as suits the humour of those around me; without the rector wants me for backgammon—or some foxhunter for a glee—or my old maiden aunt for a partner at Pope Joan: and thus the time rolls away, and when I go to bed, I can't remember I've done much; though I have been talking, walking, driving, buying, giving away or getting, singing, cyphering, or dancing, from the first moment to the last.

BEAU. Then the whole business of your life is to labour for other's comfort, and adapt yourself to other's tastes?

CARRY. By which means I've discovered that my own comfort's best secured.

BEAU. This is the secret of happiness! This girl's a mass of sympathy! And, pray, has it never struck you that if instead of a rector, or a foxhunter, or an old maiden aunt, you possessed some nearer and dearer object to stimulate your efforts, your happiness would be increased?

CARRY. Is that a fair question?

BEAU. 'Tis one at least that's easily answered.

CARRY. Well, then, to be candid with you—there is such an object.

BEAU. There is! I felt convinced of it. Well, and he knows your value? He must have perceived it, even as I did, the very moment you met?

CARRY. Far from it. I must tell you he first loved my sister, Diana; her healthful jollity delighted him, till he began to reflect that one whose affections were so liberal that she liked a being upon four legs quite as much as upon two—

BEAU. Might turn his home into a dog-kennel, and himself into a brute.

CARRY. He was next smitten with Eugenia. Her talents—her romance enraptured him; for a week this world was Eden, and he called on her to be its seraph: the next week he felt ill, and sent out for a nurse!

BEAU. I see.

CARRY. It then struck him that as life has as much clouds in it as sunshine, a companion on its path should not lift us above realities, but enable us to meet them. And thus, if poor Ellen's talents were not such as the world might envy, they were of a nature that might contribute to his own comfort and repose.

BEAU. Ay—Well, and he is all transport—all gratitude in your possession?

CARRY. On the contrary; he is so unhappy, that if I tell him to his face I love him, he won't allow himself to think so.

BEAU. Was ever such a monster!

CARRY. Because he's been deceived by one woman, he can't have faith in any.

BEAU. I have heard of such poor lunatics.

CARRY. So you see the risk I run?

BEAU. Then why, pray, should you run it?

CARRY. What can I do?

BEAU. Do without him.

CARRY. But how?

BEAU. Have another.

CARRY. Yes—but who?

BEAU. Who—why me!

CARRY. You?

BEAU. Me!

CARRY. Mr. Beauchamp!

BEAU. Miss Merton, an hour ago I was all that same being you describe—that worthless, selfish scamp that calumniated woman because he didn't deserve her; but now brought to his senses by your language and your looks. (*seizing her hand impetuously.*)

SNAFFLE *runs in again from the back.*

SNAF. (*loud and sternly.*) Sir

BEAU. What, again?

SNAF. Mr. Bingham's dying, sir!

BEAU. Let him die then, and be—

SNAF. Dying—and he wants you to come and make his will.

— CARRY. Then go to him, by all means.

BEAU. But it's all nonsense—there's no Bingham!

SNAF. No Bingham! Oh, sir! sir!

BEAU. I assure you it's all a fiction.

SNAF. A fiction—only hear him!

— CARRY. Do go to him, I beg of you.

SNAF. There, sir, the lady begs of you!

BEAU. You, Snaffle—

SNAF. And very properly, sir, for he's got to his last breath.

BEAU. And so are you, you scoundrel!

X (Grasping SNAFFLE. CAROLINE released, runs off by R. H. door.

SNAF. Now all that's merry well, sir, but I've to tell you the race is begun.

BEAU. You bane of my existence, I've to tell you your race shall end!

SNAF. Do you mean to cut the turf?

BEAU. Yes, and your throat in the bargain if I ever see your face again. Why, you rascal, won't you go?

SNAF. Go! Why, what did you say to me? Mind, the more that I refuse, the more you don't go without me.

BEAU. And so you won't leave the house?

SNAF. No, I won't!

BEAU. You won't, sir?

SNAF. No, I won't!

BEAU. And why not, sir—why not?

SNAF. Because I knows merry well that all your saying's only gammon.

BEAU. Then it shall be back-gammon, you villain!

(Seizing a chair, he chases him round the room. SNAFFLE runs off L. H., as MR. MERTON enters, who receives the blow on his cane.

MERTON. Why, George!

BEAU. My dear sir, a thousand—thousand pardons.

MERTON. Well, rather an odd way of offering me a chair. However, I'm glad to see you; and you've not been left alone?

BEAU. Alone! Oh no, sir; I've been most agreeably entertained. I'm happy to say I've seen *all* your daughters—

MERTON. All!

BEAU. All, excepting Caroline—and very charming girls they are. Diana's a superb creature—frank, spirited, facetious, but rather too fond of horseflesh: and Eugenia is most interesting—so poetic, so—but rather too ethereal—*too* seraphic for humanity. You've only one daughter that would make me a happy man—Ellen.

MERTON. Ellen!

BEAU. I know that Caroline is so much your favourite you never speak of the others. I can excuse a father's feelings; but you must also consider *mine*. You have hinted to me that you intend to give Caroline ten thousand pounds: I'm willing to take Ellen without a single sixpence!

MERTON. (*aside.*) I see—I see it all—oh, the little puss. Well, George, then I suppose I must acquaint Carry with your resolution? And, luckily, here she is.

CAROLINE enters from the lawn, veiled. SUSAN crosses at the back to L. H.

My love, I'm sorry to learn you've been so impolitic as to suffer your sisters to be seen before you; the consequence is, that this gentleman having but one heart—where it seems there are four claimants—

CARRY. (*throwing back her veil.*) Must, of course, be permitted to follow his own inclinations.

BEAU. Ellen!

CARRY. Are you sure it is—or may you not be looking at an honorary member of the Melton Mowbray, who goes out daily with the hounds, and is equally indifferent to swamp or turf—hedge or ditch—hill or dale—road or river. (*sings.*)

“Sound the horn, &c.”

(*and cuts at his legs.*)

BEAU. Oh, yes—I recollect you now.

CARRY. Or would not a darker dress restore to you that being whose early love, like yours, lies buried under the waters of the bright but terrible Maggiore—ah, Maggiore!

BEAU. I see it all. And is it possible that a criminal can hope for pardon, who deserves instant execution?

CARRY. A reprieve, only—a reprieve for a month.

BEAU. And then his *execution* shall take place in due form?

SUSAN comes from the back.

SUSAN. Oh, if you please, Mr. Beauchamp, here's your man says he must see you.

SNAFFLE follows her from the lawn.

BEAU. What again, sir?

SNAF. Oh, it's no consequence now, sir. As you say, Mr. Bingham may die and be—

BEAU. Hallo, sir, what's your errand?

SNAF. A boy's come from Newmarket to say the colt has lost.

BEAU. Oh, he has!

SNAF. Yes, he has, sir; and if you'd gone off as you promised, ten to one you'd have saved the race.

BEAU. But, at the same time, lost a wife. I believe I am the gainer. The colt will sell to pay all my engagements on the turf; and thus ends my career—a fortunate one 'twill be admitted, since it winds up with a prize. Had I continued my old tastes, I certainly might have become the owner of sundry purses, plates, and cups; but I scarcely think I am a loser when I exchange, for them, a woman!

CARRY. May we hope that other gentlemen may be converted to the same faith; and, before they shun our sex's society, learn to estimate its value? If so, the Four Sisters will not have failed in their endeavour, but, whenever the occasion offers, will feel encouraged to repeat it.

CURTAIN.

Heaven

1

Heaven

